

In the Claims:

Please cancel claim 12. Please amend claims 3, 6, 8-11, and 13-14. Please add new claims 15-21. The claims are as follows.

1-2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail, comprising the steps of:
~~preparing electronic mail for sending from an the originator to a recipient;~~
~~storing an authentication key associated with an originator in a memory of the originator;~~
~~reading the authentication key from [[a]] the memory an authentication key associated~~
~~with of the originator;~~
~~preparing electronic mail for sending from the originator to a recipient, said preparing~~
~~comprising including the authentication key, that had been read from the memory of the~~
~~originator, in an open field of the electronic mail; and~~
~~sending the electronic mail from the originator to the recipient.~~

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the electronic mail has a subject line, and the open field of the electronic mail is the subject line.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the authentication key associated with the originator is further associated with the recipient.

Serial No.: 09/919,248

2

6. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail, comprising the steps of:

storing an authentication key in a memory of a recipient of the electronic mail at an address that is dependent upon a source identifier that identifies an originator of the electronic mail;

receiving, by the recipient, the electronic mail from an the originator;

responsive to receiving the electronic mail, determining whether [[an]] the authentication key is present in an open field of the electronic mail;

when an responsive to determining that the authentication key is present, determining whether the authentication key is associated with the originator; and

rejecting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that the authentication key is not associated with the originator, rejecting the electronic mail,

wherein said determining whether the authentication key is associated with the originator includes: reading the stored authentication key from the address at the memory of the recipient, and comparing the authentication key with the stored authentication key that had been read from the address at the memory of the recipient to determine whether the authentication key is associated with the originator.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the open field is a subject line of the electronic mail.

8. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail, comprising the steps of:

Serial No.: 09/919,248

3

~~receiving, by a recipient,~~ electronic mail from an originator;
~~responsive to receiving the electronic mail,~~ determining whether an authentication key is expected to be present in an open field of the electronic mail;
~~when an responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is expected to be present, determining whether the authentication key is present; and
~~rejecting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is not ~~expected to be present,~~ accepting the electronic mail.

9. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail, comprising the steps of:

~~receiving, by a recipient,~~ electronic mail from an originator;
~~responsive to receiving the electronic mail,~~ determining whether an authentication key is expected to be present in an open field of the electronic mail;
~~when an responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is expected to be present, determining whether the authentication key is present;
~~when the responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is not present, rejecting the electronic mail; and
~~when the responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is present, determining whether the authentication key is associated with the originator[[],];
~~accepting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is associated with the originator, accepting the electronic mail; and
~~rejecting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is not associated with the originator, rejecting the electronic mail.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein the step of determining whether an authentication key is expected to be present in an open field of the electronic mail further includes the steps of:

reading a flag from a memory of the recipient at an address that is dependent upon a source identifier that identifies the originator, wherein the flag indicates whether the electronic mail from the originator is expected to include the authentication key; and

determining from the flag that had been read from the memory whether the authentication key is expected to be present in the open field of the electronic mail.

11. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein the method further comprises storing the authentication key in a memory of the recipient at an address that is dependent upon a source identifier that identifies the originator, wherein the step of determining whether the authentication key is associated with the originator further includes the steps of:

reading memory at an address that is dependent upon a source identifier that identifies the originator the stored authentication key from the address at the memory of the recipient; and

comparing the authentication key with the stored authentication key that had been read from the address at the memory of the recipient to determine whether the authentication key is associated with the originator.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail, comprising the steps of:

Serial No.: 09/919,248

5

~~receiving, by a recipient,~~ the electronic mail from an originator, the electronic mail having been previously prepared for sending from the originator to ~~[[a]] the~~ recipient;

~~responsive to receiving the electronic mail,~~ determining whether an authentication key is expected to be present in an open field of the electronic mail;

~~when an responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is expected to be present, determining whether the authentication key is present; and

~~rejecting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is not present in the open field of the electronic mail, ~~rejecting the electronic mail.~~

14. (Currently amended) An authentication method for electronic mail having a subject line, comprising the steps of:

~~receiving, by a recipient,~~ the electronic mail from an originator, the electronic mail having been previously prepared for sending from the originator with a source identifier to ~~[[a]] the~~ recipient with a destination identifier;

~~responsive to receiving the electronic mail,~~ determining whether an authentication key is expected to be present in an open field of the electronic mail;

~~when responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is not expected to be present, accepting the electronic mail;

~~when responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is expected to be present, determining whether the authentication key is present;

~~when responsive to determining that the~~ authentication key is present, determining whether the authentication key is associated with ~~both~~ the originator and ~~further associated with~~

the recipient;

~~accepting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is determined to be associated with both the originator and the recipient, accepting the electronic mail;

~~rejecting the electronic mail when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is determined not to be associated with both the originator and ~~further associated with the recipient,~~ rejecting the electronic mail; and

~~when responsive to determining that~~ the authentication key is not present, rejecting the electronic mail.

15. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.

16. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.

17. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.

18. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.

19. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.

21. (New) The method of claim 13, wherein the authentication key is dependent upon only an identity of the originator.